

HOUSE BILL 706
By Sands

AN ACT to name certain highways and bridges in Maury County.

WHEREAS, from time to time, this General Assembly has seen fit to name certain highways and bridges to honor those exemplary public servants who, during their lifetimes, worked with purpose and commitment to ensure the growth and prosperity of their respective communities; and

WHEREAS, the late William M. "Bill" Leech, Jr. of Santa Fe was an imposing and highly respected figure in this state's courtrooms and its political arenas over a span of three decades; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Leech was present at many of Tennessee's historic moments and offered shrewd legal advice during his meritorious tenure as Attorney General from 1978-1984; and

WHEREAS, as the state's chief legal officer, Bill Leech also served as a mentor and role model for many of Tennessee's most outstanding attorneys and jurists; and

WHEREAS, widely respected in legal, government and business circles across the state, Mr. Leech was an accomplished trial lawyer, in addition to his estimable career in the public sector; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Leech was honored with one of the legal profession's most distinguished awards in 1987, when he was named a Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers; and

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WHEREAS, he was a delegate to and served with distinction as the president of the 1971 Limited Constitutional Convention; and

WHEREAS, he also served astutely as a delegate to a second constitutional convention in 1977; and

WHEREAS, many of the broad reforms in the judicial system that Mr. Leech so fiercely advocated and eloquently promoted as a delegate to the 1977 Constitutional Convention were recommended for implementation again last year by the Commission on the Future of the Tennessee Judicial System; and

WHEREAS, on June 11, 1996, Bill Leech passed from this life to a far better existence; and

WHEREAS, although he is no longer with us, General Leech will be remembered for many years to come as a courageous defender of the rights of the individual and as a champion of justice; and

WHEREAS, a longtime resident of Maury County, Bill Leech practiced law in Nashville and Columbia as a partner in the firm of Waller, Lansden, Dortch and Davis and resided in the Santa Fe community at the time of his death; and

WHEREAS, it is most appropriate that a certain highway in Maury County should be named in his honor to commemorate an exemplary life spent in the service of his fellow human beings; and

WHEREAS, Charlie Skillington, was born, raised, and lived his entire life in the Santa Fe community; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Skillinton enjoyed the loving companionship of his wife, Lois Woody, and their eight children; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Charlie dedicated his entire life to farming, raising 71 corn crops during his lifetime; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Charlie was a “Mule Man” from the very beginning: he farmed with mules and raised mules for most of his life; he didn’t drive a tractor until he was in his 70’s; and

WHEREAS, he served as a noted Mule Judge throughout the Eastern United States; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Charlie was instrumental in founding the “Mule Day” activities in Maury County; and

WHEREAS, in 1950 he rode a mule, Headlight Nell, to the Capitol to invite Governor Gordon Browning to attend “Mule Day”; thirty years later, his son, John Robert, drove a team of mules to the Capitol to invite Governor Lamar Alexander to attend the “Mule Day” festivities; and

WHEREAS, legend has it that if you asked anyone in the mule business if they had heard of Charlie Skillington, the question would bring a response, “If anyone knew a good mule, it was Mr. Charlie”; and

WHEREAS, the Skillington name is well respected in Santa Fe, Maury County, and across the country as an honorable family who possesses a good knowledge of mules; and

WHEREAS, the Charlie Skillington name is continuing with a great-grandson as his namesake. “Little” Charlie rode on a mule wagon in the Bicentennial Wagon Train around the state of Tennessee last summer with his great-uncle John Robert; and

WHEREAS, at Mr. Charlie’s funeral he was carried from Santa Fe Cumberland Presbyterian Church, where he was a lifelong member, to Santa Fe Cemetery, in a mule-drawn hearse pulled by two of his mules; this was a fitting final gesture to his love and respect for the animals to which he had devoted his life; and

WHEREAS, because Mr. Charlie lived most of his life within two miles of a certain bridge in Maury County, which spans Snow Creek on the farm now owned by Mr. Charlie’s son, John Robert, it is most appropriate that this bridge should be named to honor the memory of this outstanding, civic-minded citizen; now, therefore,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, State Route 7 from the corporate limits of the City of Columbia northward to the Maury County-Hickman County boundary is hereby designated as the “Bill Leech Memorial Highway”.

SECTION 2. The bridge that spans Snow Creek on State Route 7 in Maury County is hereby designated as the “Charlie Skillington Memorial Bridge” to honor the memory of this outstanding, civic-minded citizen who was instrumental in the revival and development of Mule Day in Columbia.

SECTION 3. (a) The department of transportation is directed to erect a memorial plaque designating the segment of State Route 7 specified in Section 1 as the “Bill Leech Memorial Highway”.

(b) Such memorial plaque shall be erected on the public right-of-way on State Route 7 that is immediately adjacent to the Leech family’s property.

(c) Such memorial plaque shall include information about Mr. Leech that delineates his important role in the history of Tennessee state government and his many contributions to the public good. The Tennessee Historical Commission shall assist the department of transportation in compiling such information and drafting the language to be included on the memorial plaque.

SECTION 4. (a) The department of transportation is further directed to erect a memorial plaque designating the bridge specified in Section 2 as the “Charlie Skillington Memorial Bridge”.

(b) Such memorial plaque shall include personal information about Mr. Skillington, as well as information relative to the instrumental role he played in the revival and development of Mule Day in Columbia.

SECTION 5. The erection of such signs shall be within the guidelines prescribed by the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

SECTION 6. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.